

By: Ellis

S.B. No. 229

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1
2 relating to the establishment of an interagency task force to study
3 health literacy.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

5 SECTION 1. INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON HEALTH LITERACY. (a)

6 In this Act:

7 (1) "Commissioner" means the commissioner of public
8 health.

9 (2) "Health literacy" means an individual's ability to
10 read, understand, and act appropriately on health care information.

11 (3) "Task force" means the Interagency Task Force on
12 Health Literacy.

13 (b) Not later than December 1, 2003, the commissioner shall
14 establish the Interagency Task Force on Health Literacy to assist
15 the Texas Department of Health and appropriate health and human
16 services agencies of this state in studying health literacy and
17 developing recommendations for improving health literacy in this
18 state.

19 (c) The commissioner shall determine the number of members
20 of the task force. The commissioner shall appoint as members of the
21 task force:

22 (1) representatives of appropriate health and human
23 services agencies of this state;

24 (2) representatives of consumer and family advocacy

1 groups; and

2 (3) representatives of health care service providers.

3 (d) A member of the task force serves at the will of the
4 commissioner.

5 (e) The commissioner shall designate a member of the task
6 force to serve as presiding officer.

7 (f) The task force shall meet at the call of the presiding
8 officer.

9 (g) A member of the task force may not receive compensation
10 for serving on the task force but is entitled to reimbursement of
11 travel expenses incurred by the member while conducting the
12 business of the task force, as provided by the General
13 Appropriations Act.

14 (h) The Texas Department of Health shall provide the staff
15 necessary to assist the task force in performing its duties.

16 (i) The task force shall study and evaluate the health
17 literacy of the residents of this state. The task force shall:

18 (1) examine the ability of residents to access
19 available health services and communicate with health care
20 providers;

21 (2) identify barriers that prevent residents with low
22 health literacy from receiving health care;

23 (3) identify groups at risk for low health literacy;

24 (4) examine whether providing appropriate health
25 information to and increasing the health literacy of the
26 beneficiaries of public health insurance programs would increase
27 the efficiency of health care providers and decrease expenditures;

1 and

- 2 (5) examine the impact on health literacy of:
- 3 (A) rising health care costs;
- 4 (B) increasingly complex health treatments;
- 5 (C) an individual's age; and
- 6 (D) cultural and linguistic diversity.

7 (j) Not later than December 15, 2004, the task force shall
8 report to the commissioner and the legislature on its findings
9 under Subsection (i) of this section and make recommendations to
10 the legislature on strategies for:

11 (1) improving the health literacy of the residents of
12 this state;

13 (2) promoting the use of plain language by health care
14 providers;

15 (3) simplifying the enrollment forms and procedures
16 for accessing health care of insurance plans serving individuals in
17 a group identified as at risk for low health literacy;

18 (4) developing resources for health care providers and
19 residents of this state to increase health literacy;

20 (5) developing programs to aid the residents of this
21 state in understanding health care information;

22 (6) developing educational curricula to increase
23 health literacy;

24 (7) providing multilingual assistance and information
25 on health issues to residents of this state;

26 (8) developing easy-to-understand print and
27 electronic information on health issues; and

1 (9) funding the recommendations of the task force.

2 (k) Chapter 2110, Government Code, does not apply to the
3 task force.

4 (l) This Act expires and the task force is abolished January
5 1, 2005.

6 SECTION 2. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Act takes effect September
7 1, 2003.